Internet and Politics

Overview of Pew Internet Project research after 2010 midterm election

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Every year, the internet's role in politics is "bigger but different"

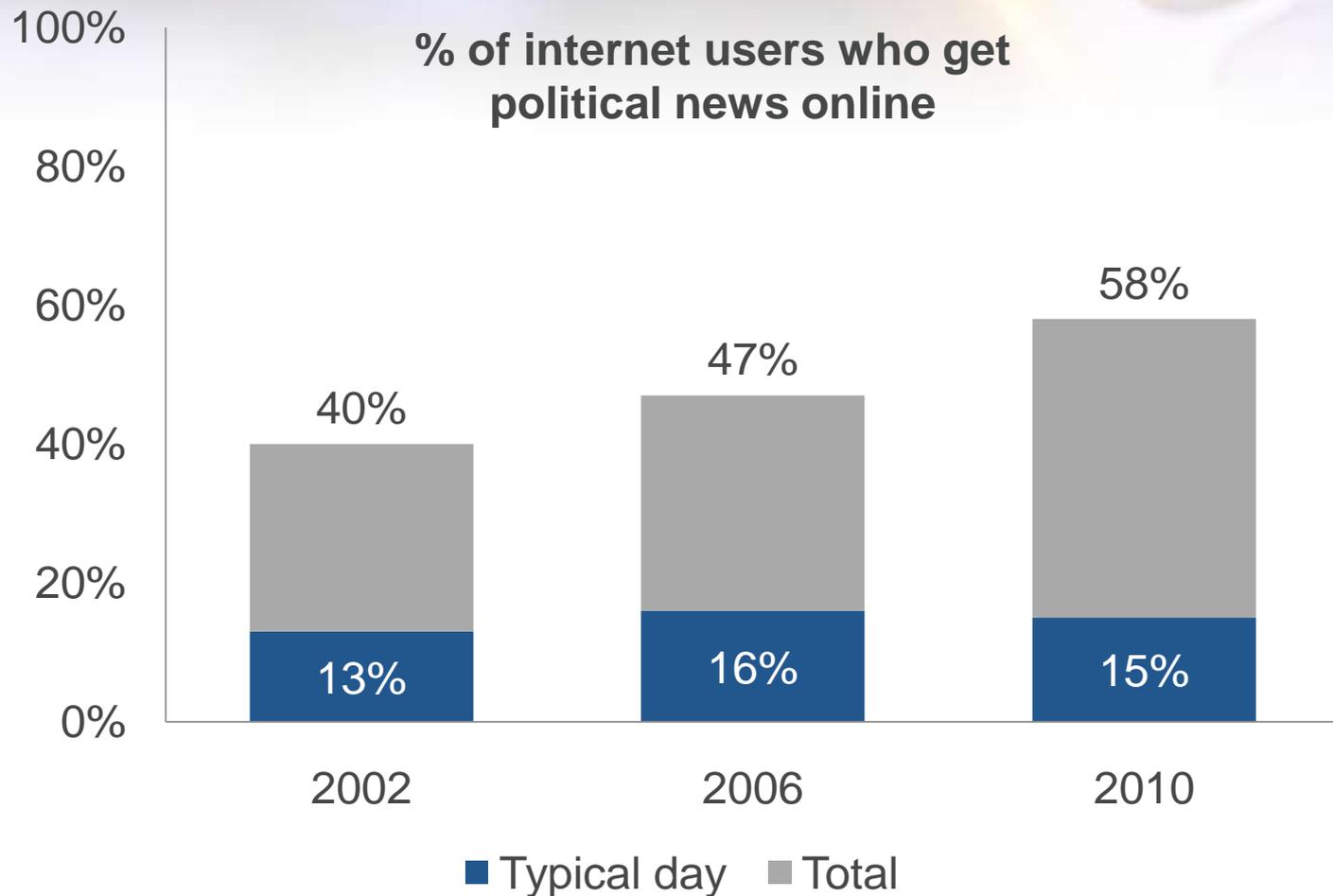# The relative value of the internet to politically active citizens is increasing

Main sources of campaign news, 2002-2010

Based on all adults

	2002	2006	2010
Television	66%	69%	67%
Newspapers	33	34	27
Internet	7	15	24
Radio	13	17	14
Magazines	1	2	2

Source: The Pew Research Center's Internet & American Life Project, November 3-24, 2010 Post-Election Tracking Survey. n=2,257 national adults ages 18 and older, including 755 cell phone interviews. Interviews were conducted in English and Spanish. Note: totals may exceed 100% due to multiple responses.

The relative value of the internet to politically active citizens is increasing

% of internet users who get political news online

- 2002: Total 40%, Typical day 13%
- 2006: Total 47%, Typical day 16%
- 2010: Total 58%, Typical day 15%

■ Typical day   ■ Total

Americans hold conflicting views about the internet's impact

Majorities of internet users agree with all of the following:

- The internet makes it easier to connect with others who share their views politically – **54%**

- The internet increases the influence of those with extreme political views – **55%**

- The internet exposes people to a wider range of political views than they can get in the traditional news media – **61%**

- It is usually difficult for them to tell what is true from what is not true when it comes to the political information they find online – **56%**

Themes for 2010: The changing face of politically-engaged social networkers

2008 vs. 2010 in pictures

2008: "Hey Dad, look at my profile on BarackObama.com"

2010: "Son, I need you to get off the computer so I can check for Facebook updates from the Tea Party Patriots"
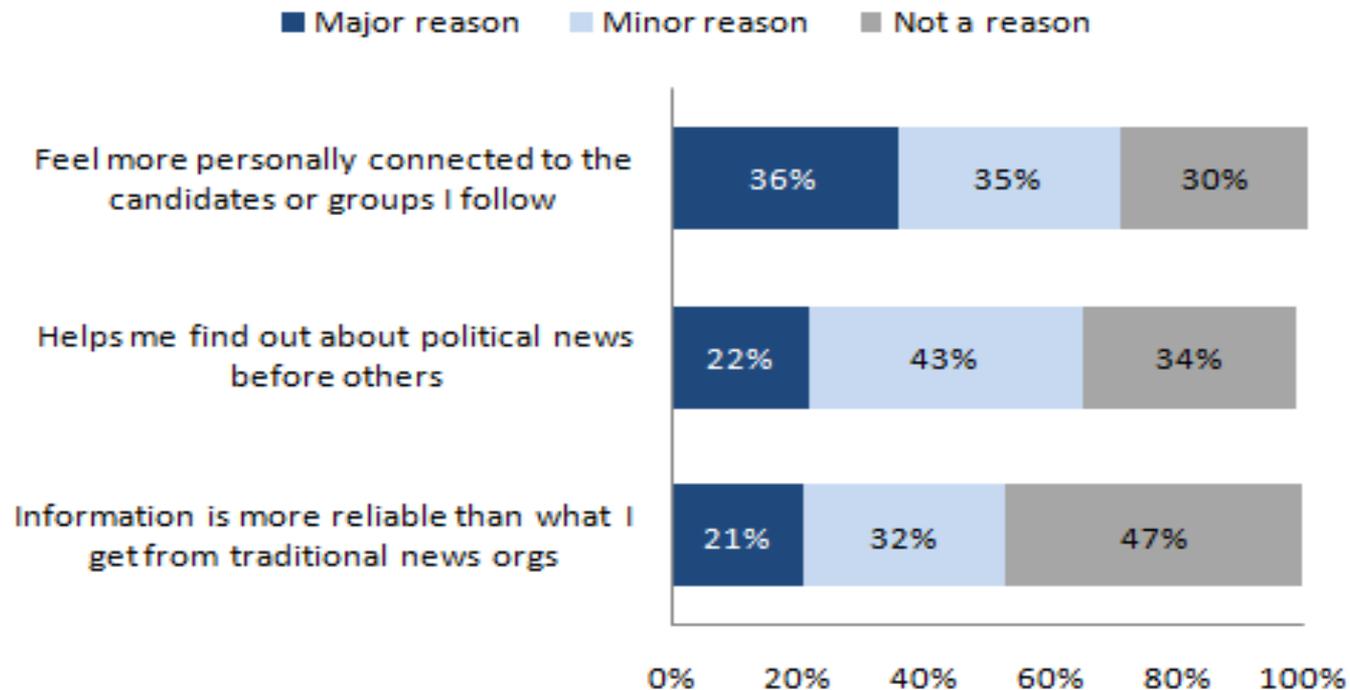
How voters used social networking sites and Twitter in 2010

- 35% of social networking site users (21% of online adults) used these sites for political reasons in 2010
  - Discover who friends voted for (18%)
  - Get campaign/candidate info (14%)
  - Post content related to campaign (13%)
  - Friend a candidate or other political group (11%)
  - Join a political group or cause (10%)
  - Start their own political group or cause (2%)

- 28% of Twitter users (2% of online adults) used Twitter politically in 2010
  - Get candidate/campaign info (16%)
  - Follow election results in real time (12%)
  - Follow a candidate or other political group (11%)
  - Include links to political content in their own tweets (9%)

Social media = "Faster and More Connected"

Major/Minor reasons for following political candidates or groups on Twitter or social networking sites

% of those who follow a candidate, party or interest group on Twitter or social networking sites

■ Major reason   ▨ Minor reason   ■ Not a reason

	Major reason	Minor reason	Not a reason
Feel more personally connected to the candidates or groups I follow	36%	35%	30%
Helps me find out about political news before others	22%	43%	34%
Information is more reliable than what I get from traditional news orgs	21%	32%	47%

0%   20%   40%   60%   80%   100%

To the extent older adults used these sites, they were as active as younger users

## Political social networking activities by age group

% within each age group who...

	18-29	30-49	50+
Use a social networking site	74%	54%	24%
% of SNS users who used the sites to...			
Discover which candidates your friends voted for	23	17	12
Post political content	17	9	12
Get candidate or campaign info	16	11	18
Friend a candidate or cause	12	10	12
Join a political group/cause	12	9	10
Start a political group/cause	2	2	2

Source: The Pew Research Center's Internet & American Life Project, November 3-24, 2010 Post-Election Tracking Survey. N=2,257 national adults ages 18 and older, including 755 cell phone interviews; n=925 based on social networking site users. Interviews were conducted in English and Spanish.

Partisan splits from 2008 vanished in 2010

Democratic and Republican voters are now equally likely to use online social networking sites

% of internet users in each group who use social networking sites
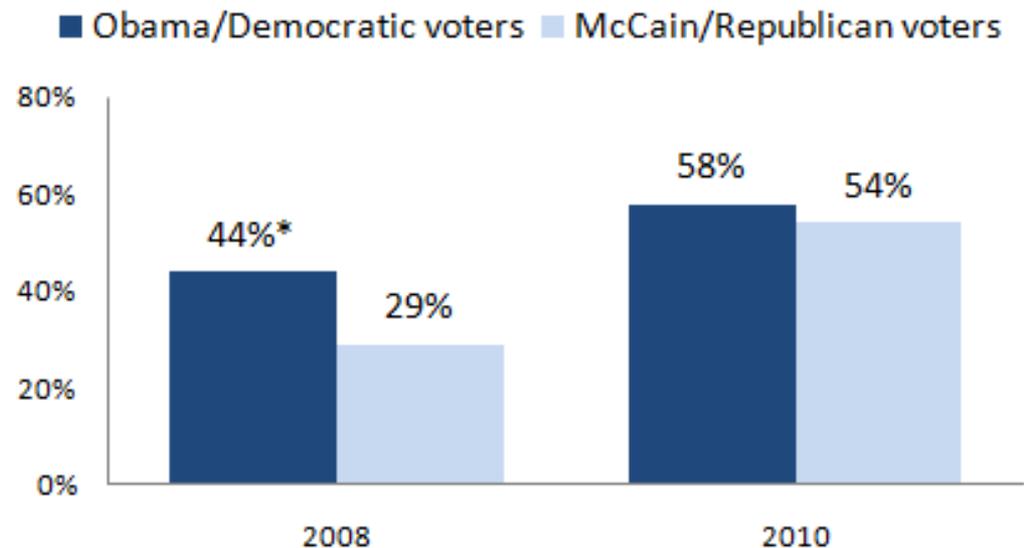
■ Obama/Democratic voters   ■ McCain/Republican voters

Source: The Pew Research Center's Internet & American Life Project, November 3-24, 2010 Post-Election Tracking Survey. N=2,257 national adults ages 18 and older, including 755 cell phone interviews; n=1,628 based on internet users. Interviews were conducted in English and Spanish. * indicates statistically significant difference between Obama voters and McCain voters.

Partisan splits from 2008 vanished in 2010

Political social networking activities by 2010 vote

% within each group who...

2010 Congressional Vote	Republican	Democrat	Did not vote
Use a social networking site	43%	44%	49%
% of SNS users who used the sites to...			
Discover which candidates your friends voted for	19	21	14
Post political content	18	16	9
Get candidate or campaign info	19	15	13
Friend a candidate or cause	17	12	8
Join a political group/cause	13	11	7
Start a political group/cause	3	3	1

Source: The Pew Research Center's Internet & American Life Project, November 3-24, 2010 Post-Election Tracking Survey. N=2,257 national adults ages 18 and older, including 755 cell phone interviews; n=925 based on social networking site users. Interviews were conducted in English and Spanish.

Partisan splits from 2008 vanished in 2010

Political social networking activities by Tea Party affiliation
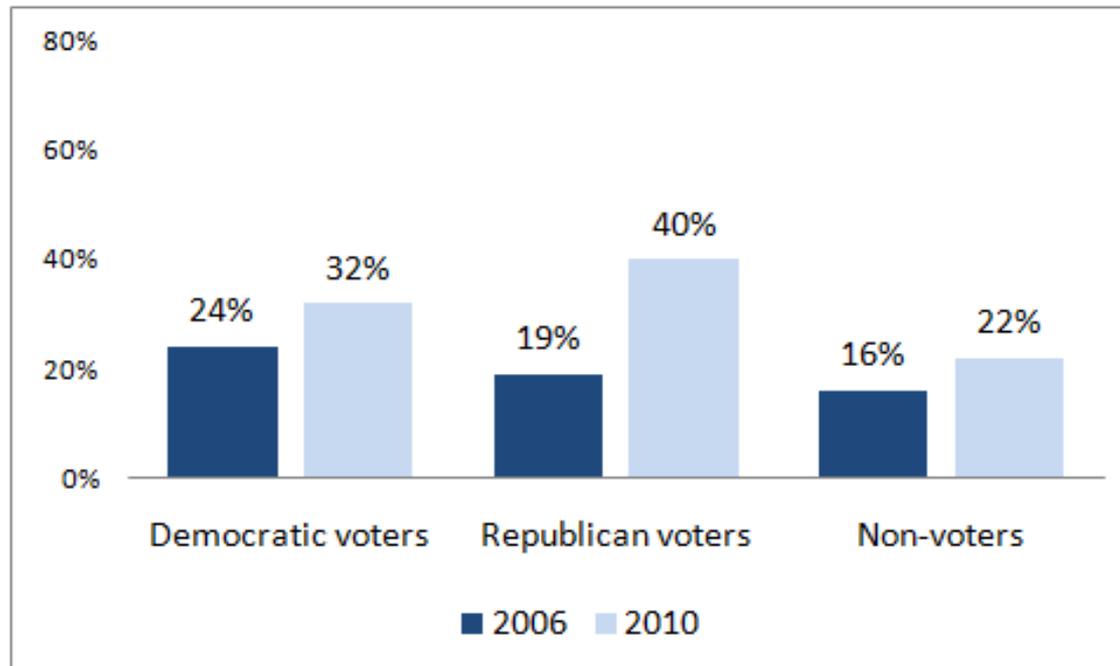
% within each group who...

Opinion of Tea Party:	Agree	Disagree	No Opinion	Have not heard of
Use a social networking site	44%	48%	47%	41%
% of SNS users who used the sites to...				
Discover which candidates your friends voted for	23	24	15	11
Post political content	19	16	10	8
Get candidate or campaign info	23	16	9	10
Friend a candidate or cause	22	13	8	4
Join a political group/cause	18	15	8	1
Start a political group/cause	2	2	2	2

Source: The Pew Research Center's Internet & American Life Project, November 3-24, 2010 Post-Election Tracking Survey. N=2,257 national adults ages 18 and older, including 755 cell phone interviews; n=925 based on social networking site users. Interviews were conducted in English and Spanish.

Partisan splits from 2008 vanished in 2010

Growth in online video consumption by voters, 2006-2010

Based on % of internet users in each group who watch political videos online

Democratic voters: 2006 = 24%, 2010 = 32%
Republican voters: 2006 = 19%, 2010 = 40%
Non-voters: 2006 = 16%, 2010 = 22%

Legend: ■ 2006 ■ 2010

Source: The Pew Research Center's Internet & American Life Project, November 3-24, 2010 Post-Election Tracking Survey. n=2,257 adult internet users ages 18 and older, including 755 cell phone interviews; interviews were conducted in English and Spanish. n=1,628 based on internet users.

Themes for 2010: The emergence of mobile politics

Mobile politics - 26% of adults used cell phones for political purposes in 2010

- 14% used their cell phones to **tell others that they voted**
- 12% used their cell phones to **keep up with news** about the election or politics
- 10% sent **text messages relating to the election** to friends, family members and others
- 6% used their cells to let others know about **conditions at their local voting stations** on election day
- 4% used their phones to **monitor results** of the election as they occurred
- 3% used their cells to **shoot and share photos or videos** related to the election
- 1% used a **cell-phone app** that provided updates from a candidate or group about election news
- 1% **contributed money** by text message to a candidate or group connected to the election like a party or interest group.

No clear partisan splits—age is the defining difference in mobile political use

Young adults and mobile politics

% of cell owners who used their phones to...	Ages 18-29	30-49	50-64	65+
Keep up with news related to the election or politics	24%	16%	12%	6%
Keep up with news related to the election or politics	24%	16%	12%	6%
Let others know about conditions/problems at your voting location	14%	13%	8%	4%
Monitor results on election night	8%	7%	3%	1%
Share photos or videos related to election campaigns	6%	3%	2%	1%
Inform others that you voted (among cell users who voted)	58%	30%	19%	10%
Send text messages related to the election (among text users)	23%	17%	13%	11%

Source: The Pew Research Center's Internet & American Life Project, November 3-24, 2010 Post-Election Tracking Survey. N=2,257 national adults ages 18 and older, including 755 cell phone interviews; n=1,918 cell phone users. Interviews were conducted in English and Spanish.

Thank you!

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